EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS,

&c.

RECEIVED FROM

SIR MOSES MONTEFIORE, F.R.S.

PRINTED BY THE DIRECTION OF

THE "LONDON COMMITTEE OF DEPUTIES OF THE BRITISH JEWS."

5601.—1840.

LONDON:
J. WERTHEIMER & CO., PRINTERS,
CIRCUS PLACE, FINSBURY CIRCUS.

STADT-BIBLIOTHEK
FRANKFURT AM MAIN

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS received from SIR MOSES MONTEFIORE, F.R.S., on the 30th November, 5601—1840, by the Committee of Correspondence of the "LONDON COMMITTEE OF DEPUTIES OF THE BRITISH JEWS,—with the ADDRESS presented to the SULTAN by SIR MOSES MONTEFIORE; the SULTAN'S gracious Reply thereto; and the FIRMAN of HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, vindicating the character and securing the rights of HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY'S subjects professing the Jewish religion, and placing them on an equality with all other subjects of the Ottoman Empire.

PRINTED BY THE DIRECTION OF THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES, AGREEABLY TO A RESOLUTION UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED AT A MEETING HELD ON MONDAY EVENING THE 30TH NOVEMBER, 5601—1840.

LETTER I.

TO THE COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE.

Constantinople, 4th November, 1840.

GENTLEMEN,

MY last letter but one forwarded by the French Packet, will have informed you of the result of my interview with His Excellency Reschid Pasha, of his promise to procure me an audience with the Sultan and a Firman acquitting the Jews of the atrocious crime of using human blood in

their religious ceremonies; but I had almost despaired of obtaining either during the continuance of the Ramazan, which only commenced on Monday the 26th of October, and lasts thirty days. To my great gratification, however, I received a note, stating that His Imperial Majesty had appointed Wednesday the 28th instant, at three hours after sun set, to receive myself and friends at the palace of Bechick Tash.—At the appointed time, accompanied by George Samuel, Esq., D. W. Wire, Esq., and Dr. Loewe, with Frederick Pisani, Esq., first Dragoman to the British Embassy, I proceeded to the palace. We went in state.

On our arrival, we were saluted by a guard of honor and a military band, and ushered into an elegant apartment where H. E. Reschid Pasha, and Rizaa Pasha, awaited our arrival: pipes and coffee were handed round.—In a few minutes an officer announced that his Imperial Majesty was ready to receive us.

Preceded and followed by a great many officers, we walked across a garden, and were introduced into the state apartments, where we found His Majesty seated. We advanced to the right, when the great officers of state took their places on the left of His Majesty.—I read an address, which was translated into Turkish by Mr. Pisani. His Majesty made a most gracious reply, which was afterwards reduced into writing and sent to me by H. E. Reschid Pasha. Both the address and the reply accompany this letter.

As soon as His Majesty had finished his reply, he requested me to come nearer to him, when I was presented by H. E. Reschid Pasha, and His Majesty then desired I would present the Gentlemen accompanying me, which I did, severally, by name.

Immediately we retired from the presence, we were conducted to a room below, where sherbet was served round, and we received the congratulations of the Ministers

present; after which we left the palace and returned home, in the same state with which we went.

Thus ended an audience most gratifying to my feelings, because I was assured the honor conferred upon us reflected back upon those who sent us, as well as upon all our co-religionists. This is my apology for being so minute in detailing circumstances which might otherwise appear unimportant.

I have not yet got the Firman, but I have no reason to doubt that I shall receive it in sufficient time to enable me to leave here by the next packet for Malta. So important, however, do I consider it, that I shall not hesitate to make a farther sacrifice of my comforts, and winter here rather than leave this city without its being in my possession.

You can hardly conceive what satisfaction our coming here has diffused amongst our co-religionists. It has softened, if not entirely removed, many prejudices which subsisted between them and some of the other inhabitants: and it will place our brethren upon a footing of equality with all their fellow-subjects.

Nor have my cares been confined alone to seeking the Firman, and the audience with the Sultan. I have visited the schools belonging to our people. I have found most of their children unacquainted with the Turkish language; and feeling that that must tend to create much prejudice where none ought to exist, I conferred with the Chief and other leaders of the several congregations, and I am happy to say the result has been an unanimous concurrence in my suggestion that the Turkish language should henceforth be taught in all their schools. Last Sabbath I had the gratification of knowing that an order to that effect had been issued by the Haham Bashi, and that it was read in the several Synagogues.

I consider this an important step. I am quite satisfied

it will be greatly useful, as it will fit our people for employments and situations from which they are now excluded.

May I be permitted to say, that when the Firman shall have been obtained, I shall consider the Mission has been most successful; and that through the blessing of Almighty God resting on our labours, our suffering brethren have been rescued from further tortures and death; that the Mission has diffused a more liberal spirit amongst others; and in the name of enlightened Europe it has protested against the use of torture in judicial proceedings; it has vindicated our most pure religion from the charges made against it by its malignant enemies, whom we pray that God in his mercy will forgive, and teach them that mutual charity would have exemplified the precepts of religion, better than persecution, calumny, torture, and death.

I have the honor to be,

Gentlemen,

Yours very faithfully,

MOSES MONTEFIORE.

LETTER II.

TO THE COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE.

At Sea, on board the Minos,
12th November, 1840.

GENTLEMEN,

WITH the utmost joy and gratitude to God, I transmit to you a copy of the Firman granted by his Imperial Majesty the Sultan.

My last letter will have informed you of what I had been doing at Constantinople, and that then I was only waiting for the promised Firman. A few hours previous to the sailing of the packet my heart was rejoiced at receiving it. I instantly made preparations for my departure, and I am now on my way to Malta.

There can be no doubt but that the Firman will be productive of lasting benefit to our people. It has been received with a joy I cannot describe by those to whom I had the pleasure of reading it, and by those to whom its contents were made known during the course of our voyage.

I had intended to have made some observations upon the Firman; but every line of it is so important that I shall leave it to speak for itself. In the East it is as much appreciated as were the Acts for the Repeal of the Catholic disabilities and the Test and Corporation Acts at home, by those who were interested in such repeal. It is, indeed, the "Magna Charta" for the Jews in the Turkish dominions. How can I express my gratitude to Him in whose hands are all our affairs, that He has been pleased to prosper our labours, and enabled us to vindicate the innocence of our brethren! Thus the clouds that hung over them, and which for a time threatened to obscure the

brightness and glory of our religion, have by the merciful goodness of God been driven away; I trust, for ever. And I pray that peace may now be upon all Israel!

I enclose you again a copy of the order for the establishment of Schools, copies of my address, and the Sultan's reply, together with a copy of the Firman; and having so done, I cannot but congratulate you, gentlemen, and all our friends in England, upon the triumphant success which has attended our labours. Sustained by God—upheld by your prayers and sympathies—we have surmounted many difficulties, endured much privation and anxiety, and at last have been rewarded for all, by the assurance that we have not left our country in vain.

I cannot close this letter without saying that I have been most kindly received by His Excellency Lord Ponsonby. The thanks of all are due to him; and so they are to His Excellency Reschid Pasha, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who possesses generous and manly sentiments, and has shewn much sympathy towards our people. Nor ought I to forget the gratitude due to our own Government at home, whose powerful aid has always been exerted to forward the objects of our Mission.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Your faithful Servant,

MOSES MONTEFIORE.

P.S. I had the pleasure of finding Mr. George Samuel at Constantinople; he was a most willing and able coadjutor to my mission.

Copy of the Address by SIR MOSES MONTEFIORE, F.R.S., *to* HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY THE SULTAN ABD-UL-MEDJID, *at the Palace of Beshick Tash, Constantinople, on Wednesday evening, the 28th day of October,* 1840.

Sir Moses Montefiore was accompanied to the Palace by George Samuel, Esq., David Williams Wire, Esq., and Dr. L. Loewe; also by Frederick Pisani, Esq., First Dragoman to the British Embassy.

ADDRESS.

"May it please your Imperial Majesty,—In the name of my brethren who have deputed me, I come to lay at the foot of your Imperial Throne the grateful homage of their respect.

"England, my country, and other enlightened nations of the earth, heard the cries of the suffering Jews at Damascus and at Rhodes, and they hastened to offer to the sufferers their sympathy and affection; but the Lord God who ruleth over all prevented the necessity of their aid at Rhodes, and inspired your Imperial Majesty with wisdom, justice, and the love of truth. Under your righteous direction the oppressor was laid low, the designs of the wicked made known, and the innocent delivered. I therefore crave permission to offer to your Imperial Majesty the profound gratitude of the hearts of our people; and to utter our prayers that the Merciful God may bless your Imperial Majesty with length of days, with wisdom, and honour, and riches; and so direct all your actions that your name may be inscribed in golden characters for ever, and the memory of your deeds smell as sweet as a garden of roses.

"In ancient times the Lord God brought our people out

of Egypt, and for ages they dwelt in Palestine; to them were committed the lively oracles of God, and, though now dispersed among the nations of the earth, they are numbered with the most peaceful and loyal subjects; and by their industry they have augmented the riches and prosperity of the countries in which they live.

"They look with love and veneration upon that land where their forefathers dwelt; they pray, that all who live therein may enjoy the shadow of your sublime protection, and in peace be permitted to worship the God of their fathers: their prayers ascend to Him whose wisdom is absolute, whose decrees are fixed and immutable, whom none can withstand, that he will make your enemies bite the dust, that they may vanish as the morning dew, and flee away as chaff before the wind—that your throne may endure for ever, and that all who live under your sceptre may have peace, sitting under their own vines and under their own fig trees, none daring or wishing to make them afraid."

To which his Imperial Majesty was pleased to make the following most gracious reply:—

"I am perfectly satisfied with the communication made, and the sentiments expressed by the deputation.

"I have been affected by the events which have taken place at Damascus, but I have endeavoured to offer some satisfaction to the Israelitish nation in giving orders that justice should be done in the affair at Rhodes.

"The Israelitish nation shall always have from me the same protection, and enjoy the same advantages, as all other subjects of my empire.

"I will grant to the deputation the Firman they have asked.

"I know, gentlemen, how to appreciate the pure philanthropy that has led you to this capital."

Translation of the FIRMAN *granted by* HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY THE SULTAN ABD-UL-MEDJID *to the Israelites in his Empire, at the request of* SIR MOSES MONTEFIORE, F.R.S., *and delivered to him at Constantinople, by* HIS EXCELLENCY REDSCHID PASHA, *Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Ottoman Porte, 11th Chesvan,* 5601—*12th Ramazan,* 1256—*corresponding to November* 6, 1840.

A FIRMAN addressed to the Chief Judge at Constantinople, at the Head of which HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY THE SULTAN has written with his own hand the following words:—"LET THAT BE EXECUTED WHICH IS PRESCRIBED IN THIS FIRMAN."

"An ancient prejudice prevailed against the Jews. The ignorant believed that the Jews were accustomed to sacrifice a human being, to make use of his blood at their feast of the Passover.

"In consequence of this opinion, the Jews of Damascus and Rhodes (who are the subjects of our empire) have been persecuted by other nations. The calumnies which have been uttered against the Jews and the vexations to which they have been subjected have at last reached our Imperial throne.

"But a short time has elapsed since some Jews dwelling in the Isle of Rhodes have been brought thence to Constantinople, where they have been tried and judged according to the new regulations, and their innocence of the accusations made against them fully proved. That, therefore, which justice and equity required has been done in their behalf.

"Besides which, the religious books of the Hebrews have been examined by learned men, well versed in their theological literature, the result of which examination is, that it is found that the Jews are strongly prohibited not only from

using human blood, but even that of animals. It therefore follows that the charges made against them and their religion are nothing but pure calumnies.

"For this reason, and for the love we bear to our subjects, we cannot permit the Jewish nation (whose innocence of the crime alleged against them is evident) to be vexed and tormented upon accusations which have not the least foundation in truth, but that, in conformity to the Hatti Scherif which had been proclaimed at Gulhané, the Jewish nation shall possess the same advantages and enjoy the same privileges as are granted to the numerous other nations who submit to our authority.

"The Jewish nation shall be protected and defended.

"To accomplish this object, we have given the most positive orders that the Jewish nation dwelling in all parts of our empire shall be perfectly protected as well as all other subjects of the Sublime Porte, and that no person shall molest them in any manner whatever (except for a just cause), neither in the free exercise of their religion, nor in that which concerns their safety and tranquillity. In consequence, the present Firman, which is ornamented at the head with our 'Hoomaioon' (sign manual), and emanates from our Imperial Chancellerie, has been delivered to the Israelitish nation.

"Thus you, the abovementioned judge, when you know the contents of this Firman, will endeavour to act with great care in the manner therein prescribed. And in order that nothing may be done in opposition to this Firman at any time hereafter, you will register it in the archives of the tribunal; you will afterwards deliver it to the Israelitish nation; and you will take great care to execute our orders and this our sovereign will.

"Given at Constantinople, the 12th Ramazan, 1256, (6th of November, 1840)."